

Request meeting with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to discuss issue

(Washington, DC) – Fourteen Members of Congress including Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-03) and Congressman Tim Ryan (OH-17) sent a letter to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) last Thursday, calling on the Bishops to increase their involvement in efforts to end the war in Iraq. In the letter, which was sent to Bishop William S. Skylstad, President of the USCCB and Bishop Thomas Wenski, International Justice and Peace Committee Chair, the Members of Congress ask for a meeting with representatives of the USCCB to discuss ways that Congressional Members and the clergy can work together to mobilize public action to end the war.

“Throughout our nation’s history, Catholics have been at the forefront of the fight for social justice,” said Congressman Tim Ryan. **“We are proud to see that the USCCB feels as strongly on this issue as we do, and we are prepared to work closely with them to reach out to fellow members of the faith.”**

“As Catholic Members of Congress we stand in unison with the Catholic Church in opposition to the War in Iraq. Yet to attain the ideal of peace, we must not only speak the words, we must take action and that is why we are reaching out to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to work with them to bring an end to the War in Iraq,” said Congresswoman DeLauro.

The full text of the letter can be read below:

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June 28, 2007

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad

Bishop of Spokane

President

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 Fourth Street, NE

Washington, DC 20017

Most Reverend Thomas Wenski

Bishop of Orlando

International Justice and Peace Committee Chair

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

3211 Fourth Street, NE

Washington, DC 20017

Your Excellencies:

As Catholic Members of Congress, we find ourselves increasingly disheartened with our

country's presence in Iraq, with the manner in which the war is prosecuted, and with the many

injustices that continue to occur there. We write today to urge you to help mobilize Catholic

opinion on this, one of the most critical issues of our time. To that end, we respectfully request a

meeting with representatives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to discuss

ways in which we can work together in pursuit of our shared goal of ending the war in Iraq as

soon as possible.

We have taken great comfort in the prophetic words of many Catholic leaders, relied on them for inspiration during our deliberations, and welcomed them in helping shape policy. If we understand the Catholic tradition correctly, thoughtful Church leaders around the world do not believe that the war in Iraq meets the strict conditions for a just war or the high moral standards for overriding the presumption against the use of force. We agree and seek an end to this injustice.

Our concerns are rooted in both the political realm and in our faith and manifest in our efforts

to enact legislation that will bring an end to this war. Pope John Paul II framed the moral

question well when he said: "When, as in Iraq in these days, war threatens the fate of

humanity, it is even more urgent to proclaim with a strong and decisive voice that peace is the

only path for building a society which is more just and marked by solidarity. Violence and

weapons can never resolve the problems of man."

We recall with no small measure of sadness the failed efforts of His Eminence Pio Cardinal

Laghi, sent in March 2003 as the Special Envoy of the Pope, to plead with President Bush for a

renewed effort at negotiations before this war began, or simply for a delay in commencing

hostilities because of the personal intervention of the Holy Father. Though treated politely, Laghi

was rebuffed even as he provided the administration with valuable insights from the Iraqi

bishops' conference and Vatican staff in Iraq. Iraq and its people would be in a far different

place today had President Bush heeded the advice of Cardinal Laghi and Pope John Paul II.

In our own education in the faith, we find the testimony of the Scriptures compelling, and

although we have no illusions about the complexities of our current situation in Iraq, we have

come to believe that peace cannot simply exist as an ideal – our efforts must be accompanied

by actions as we embrace the teachings of peace and justice.

We have deliberated with great care, and our consciences calls us to act with conviction and compassion. Throughout our nation's history Catholics have been at the forefront of the fight for social justice. Now, at another critical moment, we respectfully urge the USCCB to join with us in mobilizing support for Congress' efforts to end the war.

Sincerely,

Rep. Tim Ryan